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Violet Soen

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The Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai as a transregional node (1559-1600)

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## Exile encounters and cross-border mobility in early modern borderlands

The Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai as a transregional node (1559-1600)

- 1 Sixteenth-century Europe witnessed an unprecedented sequence of religious reformations, which disintegrated medieval Christianity into a series of confessional churches along a new divide between Catholics and Protestants. This societal change has traditionally been located in cities, such as the triad Wittenberg, Zürich and Geneva for Protestantism and the axis Rome-Madrid for Catholicism. Hence, Reformation Studies traditionally analyse the ensuing church-state collaboration, working with a silent paradigm of capitals and cities “enlightening” their *Hinterland*. The crucial perspective of borderland studies can, and should, decentre this focus on capital cities (Sahlins, 1989; Ditchfield, 2010). Early modern rulers clearly were willing to defend state borders to aggrandize their reputation and territory, but also to secure the Catholic or Protestant salvation of the souls in these realms. Despite the elaboration of the juridical principle *cuius regio, eius religio* (“whose realm, his religion”) by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, religious divisions in borderlands did not always have clear-cut or quick outcomes, as borderlines and ensuing prescribed confessions could shift dramatically, even within a lifespan. On the north-western border of the Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire, the city of Emden in the County of East Frisia changed from the prescription of Catholic to Lutheran worship, then to a *de facto* Calvinist adherence under a Lutheran Count, battling successfully to obtain a semi-sovereign statute by 1596. The Bohemian lands at the other most southern end of the Holy Roman Empire witnessed similar fractures caused by the Reformation, which would eventually trigger the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century. These kinds of conflicts frequently lingered on for decades, if not centuries (Asche, 2007; Asche, 2009; Questier, 2011; Kaplan, 2007).
- 2 By focusing on these often forgotten peripheries, a perspective “from the borderlands” can correct the preponderance of urban, regional and national history in Reformation studies, and its top-down focus of research. Borderlands should be recognized as a context *sui generis*, in which human action has a particular outlook due to the vicinity of at least two (but in the early modern period often more) political and cultural systems, and in which power balances are more diffuse than in capitals or cities (cf. Zartman, 2010). For the early modern period, the particularity of these *sociétés de frontière* related (amongst many other things) to the constant passage and settlement of religious refugees (Bertrand & Planas, 2011; Kaplan, Carlson & Cruz, 2009). The case study under scrutiny is the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai, created in 1559 and located in the southern part of the Habsburg Netherlands along the border with the Kingdom of France. This medium level of historical observation – not states, not localities but a region somewhere “in between” the local community and an abstract state – is particularly revealing, as cross-border movements led to encounters between exiles with diverse regional provenances which current historiography traditionally treats separately.
- 3 Hence, this contribution works from the methodology of transregional history which conceptualizes the past of regions along, across and beyond their boundaries, charting how these cross-border exchanges affected human behaviour and inspired historical *transition*. As such, transregional history helps to uncover processes of mobility, transfer and translation that in our view were decisive for early modern societies<sup>1</sup>. Whereas with respect to the Cambrai region exiled Englishmen in, for instance, the cities of Douai and Paris (Highley, 2008; Gibbons, 2011), are studied from the perspective of the implications for what happened in England, their exchanges on the borders of the Habsburg Low Countries and of France also merit closer attention. Aside from studying Englishmen in the confined urban spaces of Douai and Paris, this contribution will underline that one should also recognize their positioning and repositioning along and across the Habsburg-French border between them (Roll *et al.*,

2010). Hence, this contribution will argue that (1) the frontier position of the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai led to (2) systematic and emblematic encounters between Catholic exiles of different regional backgrounds. In their project of establishing exile communities (Dillon, 2002), (3) these refugees engaged with the existing possibilities and patterns of cross-border mobility in order to widen their radius of action and influence. As such, the borderlands of the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai came to constitute a transregional node within the Catholic Reformation of the early modern era.

## Cambrai, the eternal frontier city

- 4 The city of Cambrai, battle ground of both World War I and II, has somehow always been located on the frontier; nowadays this city on the river Scheldt (*l'Escaut*) is part of Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the French *région* which borders Belgium. The city still hosts an episcopal see, once extending over the Low Countries and France alike (Pierrard, 1978). Since the Merovingian Middle Ages, Cambrai was the centre of an important and territorially elongated bishopric, extending along the eastern bank of the river Scheldt up to Antwerp in Brabant. Over the course of time, the Bishop became Duke of Cambrai and Count of Le Cambrésis, invested with secular powers by the Holy Roman Emperor (Ruiz Ibáñez & Raab, 2000). In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the Duke-Bishop regularly aspired to maintain neutrality in the enduring conflicts between the Emperor, the Duke of Burgundy and the French King, demonstrating the pivotal role of his dominion. As a result, Emperor Charles V became particularly discontented with the semi-sovereign ambitions of the bishops in Cambrai and their counterparts in the adjacent bishopric of Thérouanne, often stemming from powerful noble houses with honourable pedigrees in these borderlands. In 1543, Charles V enforced upon Cambrai a citadel, altering the sacred and secular landscape of the city fundamentally. Even if the Duke-Bishop himself kept a considerable margin to manoeuvre, the enclave Cambrai and Le Cambrésis came to function as a satellite state of the Habsburg Low Countries. The fate of the bishopric of Thérouanne was far worse, as the city and the see were sacked and destroyed in 1553, and the bishopric was abolished soon after (Delmaire, 1999).
- 5 In the end, the Habsburg dynasty aimed to align political and ecclesiastical boundaries in and around its territories. With the accumulation of lands in the Low Countries and on the Iberian Peninsula, the Habsburgs successfully lobbied the Pope for new ecclesiastical divisions in these regions. When Philip II obtained the long-desired reform of the bishoprics in the Low Countries from Pope Paul IV in 1559, the Bishop of Cambrai lost most of his jurisdiction. This probably happened in another attempt to curb the high ambitions of the Cambrai bishops, although the loss in power and territory was also compensated: Cambrai was elevated to archbishopric, including jurisdiction over lands previously belonging to the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai in France. Hence, Cambrai became the centre of an ecclesiastical province with the suffragan bishoprics of Tournai, Namur, Saint-Omer and Arras, and important urban centres like Valenciennes, Mons, Lille and Douai. It became the metropolitan see of most of the French-speaking territories under Habsburg rule in the Low Countries, in order to facilitate pastoral care at least from a linguistic perspective. Despite the seniority of his see, the Archbishop of Cambrai did not become the primate of the *ecclesia Belgica*, as that honour went to the newly erected and more centrally located archbishopric in Dutch-speaking Mechelen, near Brussels (Dierickx, 1950). Hence, in 1559 Duke-Bishop Maximilien de Berghes became the first archbishop of Cambrai, defending for the rest of his career the prestige and seniority of his see, in competition with Mechelen and Reims alike. Within this new ecclesiastical division, Cambrai was even more at the border than ever before, not only politically but also ecclesiastically. Especially the Archbishop of Reims, the then powerful Cardinal Charles de Lorraine, time and again initiated complaints to the Holy See about the usurpation of powers by Cambrai, his former suffragan and new competitor (Soen & Hollevoet, forthcoming).
- 6 The reform of the bishoprics in 1559 happened to coincide with a period of dynastic peace in these borderlands. Since the late fifteenth century, the border region had suffered from the enduring warfare between the Burgundian-Habsburg and Valois dynasties. Peace treaties were

concluded again and again, with the city of Cambrai hosting for example the peace negotiations in 1529. Thirty years later in 1559, the city of Le Cateau-Cambrésis, the lands of the new archbishop, set the scene for another round of diplomacy. Philip II of Spain and Henri II of France decided to end their dynastic rivalry and to “fight heresy” instead. At that moment, both rulers still aimed to uphold the exclusivity of the Roman Catholic Church, and refused to implement the Peace of Augsburg, endorsed for the Holy Roman Empire and allowed *Reichsfürste* to choose between the Catholic and the Lutheran confession for their subjects. As the city of Cambrai until 1595 officially belonged to the Holy Roman Empire (with the archbishop often attending its *Reichstag*), citizens of Cambrai repeatedly tried to profit from the regulations of the Peace of Augsburg. Occasionally, the Emperor even tried to intervene on behalf of prosecuted Lutherans, asking the archbishop of Cambrai to show leniency. The archbishopric of Cambrai therefore became the buffer zone between the Holy Roman Empire, where bi-confessional agreements were concluded, and France and the Low Countries where the rulers maintained Catholicism as the exclusive religion (Weis, 2003).

- 7 To sum up, from a politico-religious perspective, the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai in 1559 was for three reasons a significant type of borderland in the early modern era. First, its new boundaries were more or less the political borderlines between the Habsburg Low Countries and France. Secondly, the Ecclesiastical Province came to function as the Habsburg counterpart and competitor of Reims in France, its former metropolitan church. Thirdly, and finally, the enclave of the city of Cambrai and the County of Cambrésis officially belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, where the Peace of Augsburg allowed princes to choose the Catholic or Lutheran religion of their subjects, whereas in practice city and county functioned as satellite states of Philip II who defended the exclusivity of Catholicism. After a period of French rule from 1579 onwards and a Spanish siege in 1595, the city and county were annexed and integrated into the Habsburg Low Countries (Ruiz Ibáñez, 2003). When Louis XIII and later Louis XIV started their wars in *Le Nord* from 1635 onwards, the ecclesiastical province started to disintegrate politically, and this segregation was sealed with the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1659. Hence, the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai functioned within a complex web of borders and boundaries, turning it into an epitome of early modern borderlands (Roll *et al.*, 2010; Kaplan *et al.*, 2009; Soen, Junot & Mariage, 2014).

## Exile encounters

- 8 During the religious wars and diasporas of the early modern period, borders usually created opportunities for the profession of one’s faith, whether “old” Catholicism or “new” Protestantism (Fehler *et al.*, 2014). Fleeing over the border traditionally limited the chance of persecution, as justice officers operated within bounded territories. Still, not all cross-border religious mobility resulted from enforcement or persecution: Kaplan (2007) argued that the early modern reality of “borders, borders everywhere” meant that the chance to attend mass or religious services (or festivities) in adjacent jurisdictions usually pre-empted the urge to move, but engendered spectacular cross-border movements on Holy Days. As a result, borderlands in early modern times provided sites of contact between Protestants and Catholics, inspiring sometimes radicalisation, sometimes oecumenical encounter, and most often pragmatic toleration (resp. Janssen, 2013; Kaplan, 2007; Spohnholz & Waite, 2014).
- 9 Hence, after its erection in 1559 at the border of the Habsburg Netherlands and France, the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai equally turned into a transit zone for religious mobility of different kinds and convictions. Due to the relative stability after the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis signed in the same year, Reformed preachers in particular took the chance to cross borders, a process facilitated by the shared vernacular language (Deyon & Lottin, 1981) and a pre-existing “route du textile” passing from Saint-Quentin to Valenciennes over Cambrai. These itinerant preachers, from neighbouring French Picardy, the province of Calvin’s birth, confused local officials by their unpredictable movements. In this context, the Archbishop alleged that especially the Calvinist communities of Montdidier in Picardy sent their preachers everywhere (Soen & Hollevoet, forthcoming). Most famously, the Academy in Geneva gradually sent out its students in order to establish Churches under the Cross in frontier

cities like Valenciennes and Mons. During the Iconoclastic Fury, starting not coincidentally in Walloon Flanders in August 1566, French preachers and disciples from Geneva took their chance to preach their version of the Gospel. The justifications of iconoclasm by local magistrates often mentioned the presence of *estrangers* (foreigners) that mobilized the populace (although this excuse also served as a common trope to diminish their role in the events). Still, when Calvinist and voluntary troops were raised to defy Habsburg rule, again cross-border networks were vitalized. Especially the Calvinist coup of Valenciennes, the “new Geneva” in 1566-7, was enabled by a logistic back-up of Frenchmen (Junot, 2009; Spicer, 2011). The repression of the Iconoclastic Fury, led chiefly by the Duke of Alba, inspired exile in the other direction: many Calvinists now fled over the border before they were arrested, and throughout the Netherlands more than 10,000 inhabitants were banished by the Council of Troubles (Van Roosbroeck, 1968; Verheyden, 1981).

10 Simultaneously with the initial Protestant influx, the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai gradually turned into a safe haven for Catholic exiles from different regions (Junot & Kervyn, 2015; for a broader perspective Braun, 2010). The 1562 foundation of a university in the city of Douai certainly was a pull-factor and a milestone in this process. Intensive lobbying from Louvain professors and local elites argued that a university in the region bordering France would prevent French-speaking vassals of the King of Spain from studying in the universities of Paris or Rouen, where they could become “infected” with heretical ideas. Despite a royal prohibition of studying “abroad” in 1559, many students still crossed the border with France to pursue a university education. The University of Douai soon established a solid reputation in the fields of theology and law, attracting students from the Low Countries and its neighbouring territories alike, and changing the regional dynamics for higher education (Soen, 2010).

11 From the 1560s onwards, the Cambrai region attracted a first and dominant group of Catholic exiles from England, where after the passing of Mary Tudor Catholicism had once again been proscribed under Queen Elizabeth I (Lechat, 1914); some decades later Irish exiles followed, and to a lesser extent Scottish Catholics exiled by James VI (Arblaster, 2009). In this respect Douai University played an important role: one of its first professors was the English Catholic theologian Richard Smyth (1499-1563). Smyth first taught in Oxford, but then fled under Elizabeth I to the University of Louvain. Solicited to do so, he swiftly moved to Douai as a university closer to the Channel than Louvain. Smyth certainly gave the young university prestige, and many young English students came to prefer Douai over Louvain, waiting closer to “home” for a chance to return (Löwe, 1999, 2003). In 1567, (the future Cardinal) William Allen travelled to Rome and obtained the foundation of an English College in Douai, which would become a stronghold for the training of young English clerics for their mission in their native country. Moreover, the University of Douai, and the English College in the same city would become melting pots of regional and cultural backgrounds. Later on, and until the seventeenth century, English (and later Irish and Scottish) seminaries, colleges and convents were founded along both sides of the frontier with France, in Boulogne (short-lived), Dunkirk, Saint-Omer, Lille, Tournai, Gravelines, Aire-sur-la-Lys, Douai and Cambrai (Bowden *et al.*, 2012; Guilday, 1914).

12 A second cluster of Catholic refugees was made up of those from other regions of the Habsburg Low Countries, where during the Dutch Revolt insurgents disputed the rule of Philip II and experimented with multiconfessional and mainly Calvinist regimes. Already from 1572 onwards, the rebels in Holland and Zeeland confiscated properties of Catholic institutions, and forced out many clerics (Tracy, 1999). While the territory of the rebel provinces expanded, the possibilities for Catholic worship diminished, particularly during the regimes of Calvinist Republics in Brabant and Flanders between 1580 and 1585 (Weis, 2010; Pollmann, 2011). So, willy-nilly Flemish and Brabantine clergymen and other Catholics fled to loyalist Douai and its surroundings, profiting from the intellectual culture, and the international contacts, anxiously waiting to return home (Janssen, 2014). These Dutch- and Frisian-speaking Catholic exiles still preferred this French-speaking region as a shelter in order to continue residing within the territories of the Spanish monarchy, not risking a criminal procedure after their return. As Douai was part of Walloon Flanders, refugees from Flanders actually moved within the

confines of their native county, and refugees from northern Frisia resettled within the limits of Habsburg authority in the south.

13 A last group of incoming Catholic exiles were to be found amongst the French *Ligue*, which tried to prevent Henri de Navarre, a former Protestant prince but recent Catholic convert, from inheriting the French Crown. In their *Ligueurs de l'exil*, Descimon/Ruíz Ibáñez (2005) mapped how French radical Catholic Leaguers fled to the border regions of the Habsburg Low Countries, a process again smoothed by the shared language. They left France chiefly in the years around 1595, when Henri de Navarre came to power as Henri IV. These Catholics were not fleeing from a Protestant ruler, but from a moderate Catholic monarch, whose sincerity and devotion they doubted and whose vengeance they had to fear. Once in Habsburg territory, the exiled leaguers engaged in a fierce cross-border mobilization to pursue their battle for Paris. Most of them would later return to their native country as Henri IV maintained a deliberate policy of pacification, in the end also towards exiles (Brunet & Ruiz Ibáñez, 2015; for a comparative perspective Van Nierop, 1995).

14 While historiography has focused on how the exiles related to what happened in their home countries, these different exile communities, perhaps more importantly, compared their experiences. Exile did not take place in isolation, but led to new encounters and insights. Take for instance the *Institutio necessaria* of the Flemish Catholic polemist Johannes Costerius, published in Douai in 1580<sup>2</sup>. This priest from Oudenaarde fled the Calvinist regimes in his native County of Flanders, choosing to shelter in its only “safe” part, Walloon Flanders. As Geert Janssen (2011 and 2014) has recently demonstrated, Costerius was pivotal in changing the opinions of Catholic inhabitants of the Low Countries about exile. The polemist argued that flight could be seen as a positive and biblically inspired option in order to reach a spiritual rebirth, and definitively a better choice than to endure heretical rule. But what is more interesting in this case is that the *Institutio necessaria* made a comparison between the exiles from England and the more recent Dutch-speaking exiles from territories under Calvinist rule, to show that Catholic flight was not a new phenomenon, and that English exiles showed solidarity with the fate of the Flemish exiles. As such, exiles enlarged their mental geographies throughout the process, comparing their diverse backgrounds but common experiences in the safe havens of Douai and its surroundings. Other works coming off the printing presses in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai also document this mutual learning process. During his stay in Douai, the aforementioned Richard Smyth chose to publish in Latin again (rather than in English) in order to have more outreach towards the different exile groups gathered in and around Douai and towards an international public; Dutch-speaking professors traditionally used Latin as the *lingua franca* (Soen, Soetaert & Verberckmoes, 2015). As a result, the English College and the University of Douai became a kind of microcosm in which lessons for the “Universal Church” of the Counter-Reformation were drawn from a patchwork of transregional encounters in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai.

15 There were, then, many reasons the Province of Cambrai became a transitory zone during the sixteenth century. First, the proximity to the Channel predominated, making it attractive to English, Scottish and Irish exiles to stay in the vicinity of the prestigious University in Douai and the English College. Secondly, the shared vernacular language with France facilitated cross-border exchange, and the influx of fleeing *Ligueurs*. And finally, Catholics from all over the Habsburg Netherlands still preferred to flee to its southernmost French-speaking part, remaining more or less legally within the bounds of Habsburg territory. Alongside religious motivations, economic motivations inspired temporary textile workers to move back and forth between the Low Countries, England and France, making the region prone to movements and mobilities of all kinds (Junot, 2012). More interesting here is that these frequent influxes and back-and-forth migration led to encounters between Catholic exiles from different backgrounds; though we are far from documenting all of them, preliminary evidence hints that the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai became a site of encounter in which Catholicism became reconfigured along transregional contacts.

## Cross-border mobility

- 16 Refugees not only met along and across borders, they also had to work within their new local context. Accordingly, they engaged in existing patterns of cross-border mobility, particularly in the recently reshuffled religious landscape between Cambrai and Reims where many contacts remained vigorous. As such, the borderlands of the ecclesiastical province came to form a transregional node for the Catholic Reformation, with exiles and locals switching back and forth between all sides of the borders in order to maximise their radius of influence. The borderlands therefore not only functioned as a site of contact, but also as a *melting pot* for ideas with different regional provenances, changing the mental and spiritual horizons of both natives and newcomers.
- 17 The English Douai-Reims Bible immediately comes to mind as a first example of cross-border collaboration by exiles. By 1578-1579 the members of the English College in Habsburg Douai (and the exiles gathered round this institution) used the old cross-border trading routes in the direction of the annual fairs of French Champagne when they were temporarily expelled by a short-lived Calvinist regime in the city. Hence, their plan to provide an English, Catholic translation of the New Testament first materialized in French Reims in 1582 instead of Douai (Walsham, 2014; Balsamo, 2010). They later returned, but thirty years were to pass before the Old Testament was printed in Habsburg Douai, in 1609. Along the road this group obtained support from the French noble clan of Guise as well as the Habsburg governors of the Low Countries and intellectual and ecclesiastical elites across the borders (Arblaster, 2009). The aim to distinguish a distinct “English Catholicism” (Highley, 2008) obscures the fact that these exiles interacted with their host society and gradually introduced transregional elements to reach communities in the Low Countries and France alike.
- 18 Take for instance the English theologian Thomas Stapleton, who switched language codes when he moved from Louvain to Douai in 1569, where he held the chair of controversial theology between 1571 and 1582. While he had previously published English works with Jean Bogard in his Louvain period, he changed his intellectual policy and oeuvre in Douai. First, he shifted back to Latin, as in the borderlands he came to understand that fighting the Anti-Christ was not limited to England, but was pertinent to the wider community of Catholic Believers. Secondly, Stapleton switched temporarily to the French printer Michel Sonnius in Paris (François, 2013). This might have been the result of the unstable regime around 1578-1579 in Douai, but it also showed that from Douai the connections with Parisian printers were as easily made as with Antwerp’s printers. In 1580, Stapleton again collaborated with the local printer Jean Bogard, who in the meantime had opened a branch store in Douai, but pursued his policy of editing texts in Latin (Soen, Soetaert & Verberckmoes, 2015).
- 19 The Flemish refugees in Douai also took advantage of the “old” links with Reims. In 1580-1581, once the Habsburg authority was definitively restored within Douai and its surroundings, Jean Bogard edited an octavo-edition of 77 pages under the title *Briefve response a un livre d'un Huguenot* (*Short Answer to a Book of a Huguenot*)<sup>3</sup>. The title page mentioned the Reims canon Gentian Hervet (1499-1584) as the author. The French Catholic theologian and polemist Hervet(ius), was an outstanding name in the Catholic world, having twice assisted at the Council of Trent, and having provided many translations of Greek and Roman classics. After his last return from Trent as intimate councillor of Cardinal Charles de Lorraine, his patron appointed him as one of the canons in the Reims chapter, having attained the respectable age of 81 when the Douai edition with his name was printed. The Douai edition with a title page mentioning a Reims-based author already shows that the Habsburg-French border was easily transcended in matters of faith, and that the older intellectual and religious landscape of the Ecclesiastical Province of Reims still functioned to a certain extent.
- 20 Based on Hervetius’ age, however, it seems less likely that he himself was responsible for the content. Rather, as has been argued by Antoon Viaene (1956), the *Short Answer to a Book of a Huguenot* was probably written by a group of refugees from the County of Flanders, where the Calvinist Regimes in many cities were busily expelling Catholics. In particular three amongst them, Cornelius Vrancx, Jan David and Mathias Lambrecht (later bishop of Bruges) are likely to have joined forces in writing a polemical piece against the Huguenot propaganda. They

seemed to have finished the manuscript by September 1579, though the edition only appeared in 1580-1. They must have preferred to profit from the authority of Hervet in editing their text, while opting for further security in their own safe haven of Douai. But they also wished to present the text as Hervet's answer to the *Biëncorff* of Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde. This active Protestant polemist, and right-hand-man to William of Orange, had written against the work of Hervet, and provided a Protestant alternative account in matters of faith. Still, they did not name Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde, but preferred to make a fictive Huguenot personage, called Iomlaiela. It seems as though the authors, or at least Cornelius Vranckx, also prepared a second refutation of the *Biëncorff* in Dutch. And even if the manuscript was approved by the church authorities in Douai on 5 July 1581, it never appeared in print<sup>4</sup>. Maybe Douai printers discerned little economic profit for a Dutch text refuting the famous *Biëncorff*; or maybe, in the bilingual surroundings of Douai, the pseudonymous Hervet editions in French seemed to cover the market sufficiently?

- 21 As a final example, the life of the Frenchmen Matthieu de Launoy (1541-1607) may be outlined here to illustrate how believers tried to negotiate and renegotiate their beliefs and convictions "along" the border (Descimon & Ruiz Ibáñez, 2005; Dillon, 2002). Born in Île-de-France to a Catholic family, De Launoy converted to Calvinism and studied from 1560 onwards at the Academy in Geneva. Later, he was amongst those sent out to preach around Valenciennes and Lille on the border with France, but also in Strasbourg and Sedan. Fleeing the Saint-Bartholomew massacre, the Protestant preacher ended up in undercover missions in Antwerp, Zeeland and Holland. Probably influenced by his lifelong friend Henri Penetier, he converted back to Catholicism around 1576, and a while later moved back to France. Between 1577 and 1578, Douai printers issued two important reeditions of his texts first appeared in Paris: the 526-page *La Réfutation des fausses suppositions et perverses applications* and the shorter 89-page *Petit bouclier de la foy catholique*<sup>5</sup>. In his *Réfutation*, De Launoy aimed to reach a wider audience on both sides of the border, writing "bas et simple" to provide Catholics with arguments to counter Protestant preachers; and with his first *Réfutation* translated into Dutch, he would reach even more (Soen, Soetaert & Verberckmoes, 2015). While on the title page the *Petit bouclier* was dedicated to the "senate and the people of Tournai" in the Low Countries, he had support across the border from the Guises. Safeguarded by the patronage of these powerful figures, he returned to Paris where he became a ghost-writer, polemist and activist for the Ligue. Later still, when the League foundered in Paris, he was one of the *ligueurs de l'exil*, fleeing back to Habsburg territory even before 1594 and probably dying there in 1608. His biography documents a back-and-forth switch along the border between the Habsburg Low Countries and France in a lifelong search for the true faith.

## Conclusions

- 22 Though traditionally left out of master narratives, early modern borderlands have been particularly associated with the passage of religious exiles, and the questions about their impact have been taken up foremost in Protestant historiography (Janssen 2013). Amongst many others, Pettegree (1992) documented how persecuted Dutch protestants settled in the frontier city of Emden, setting up a stricter church organisation across the border, and instrumentalizing the printing press to sustain relatives and coreligionists at "home". Today, more historiographical attention is being devoted to similar experiences within Catholicism. Recently Janssens (2012 and 2014) insisted on the fact that Dutch Catholics fleeing Calvinist regimes sharpened opinions and beliefs in frontier cities like Habsburg Douai and Saint-Omer, giving rise to a more militant interpretation of their faith. Literature on Protestant and Catholic exile thus seems to advance that the common experience of refugees in borderlands consisted of a "spiritual rebirth" and a hardening of beliefs (Spohnholz & Waite, 2014; Grell, 2009). This contribution, however, did not focus on the spiritual rebirth of these exiles in borderlands, but on the widening of their mental horizons, and their cross-border mobility even in their new safe havens. It stressed the encounters between the exiles of different regions, as well as their contacts with the host society in borderlands.



23 The Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai has proven a highly relevant test case for this kind of contribution to borderlands studies: from its erection in 1559 on the southern border of the Habsburg Low Countries, it created a site of encounter for Catholic refugees from different regional backgrounds, such as the British Isles, France and the insurgent provinces of the Low Countries. The initial evidence gathered here indicates that many of these exiles learned from each other, and even collaborated, especially in the local printing houses, rather than being solely focused on what happened in their homelands. Cities such as Douai and Saint-Omer therefore became microcosms in which the aforementioned “spiritual rebirth” also implied a widening of mental horizons along transregional contacts. Moreover, plugging into their new worlds and new homes, exiles in borderlands engaged with pre-existing patterns in cross-border exchange with France. English elites exchanged Reims for Douai and there printed the first part of their Catholic translation of the Bible, and Flemish refugees in Douai used the Reims theologian Hervetius as their *nom de plume*, while French polemicists waited just over the border to secure a powerful patron. Through these encounters and the cross-border mobility of refugees, Catholic Reform became remoulded in a transregional way. Hence, the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai should take its due place as a transregional node of the Catholic Reformation.

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## Notes

1 At the Research Group Early Modern History of the KU Leuven, we have developed a think tank around this concept; the website [www.transregionalhistory.eu](http://www.transregionalhistory.eu) gives regular updates about our research results.

2 Johannes Costerius, *Institutio necessaria de exitu Aegypti et fuga Babylonis*, Douai, Jean Bogard, 1580, USTC 110956. USTC refers to the *Universal Short Title Catalogue*, compiled at the University of Saint Andrews (<http://www.ustc.ac.uk/>). A larger identification and contextualisation of these prints will be available soon through our project's database: [http://www.odis.be/lnk/en/PB\\_35989](http://www.odis.be/lnk/en/PB_35989).

3 *Briefve response de Gentian Hervet, chanoine de Rheims, a un liure d'un Huguenot, asseuré menteur & il hypocrite, contrefaisant le catholique*, Intitulé, *Commentaire et illustration sur l'epistre missive de M. Gentian Hervet*, Douai, Chez Jean Bogard, 1580, USTC 84291 and with reprint in 1581, USTC 16258. The USTC 84291 is an only surviving copy in St.-Petersburg, which might be wrongly dated in the local bibliography of the institution. Therefore, it might be that both references refer actually to the same edition of 1581.

4 University library of Ghent, Ms. 166: *Antirabotenus ieghens het eerste stuck des byencorfs vanden ghefingierden Isaacq Rabotenus*.

5 Matthieu de Launoy & Henry Penetier, *La réfutation des fausses suppositions, et perverses applications d'aucunes sentences des saintes Écritures*, Douai, Jean Bogard, 1578, USTC 13153 ([http://www.odis.be/lnk/en/PB\\_35976](http://www.odis.be/lnk/en/PB_35976)); Matthieu de Launoy, *Petit bouclier de la foy catholique*, Douai, Jacques Boscard, 1578, USTC 13154 ([http://www.odis.be/lnk/en/PB\\_35967](http://www.odis.be/lnk/en/PB_35967)).

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### **Résumés**

The Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai offers a highly interesting test case for both the field of borderlands studies and transregional history: since its erection in 1559 at the southern border of the Habsburg Low Countries, it hosted Catholic refugees from different regional backgrounds, such as the British Isles, France and the insurgent provinces of the Low Countries. This contribution argues that (1) the frontier position of the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai led to (2) systematic encounters between Catholic exiles of diverse regional provenances. Rather than solely seeking to establish segregated exile communities, as argued in older nationalist historiographies, (3) these refugees interacted with their host society, and inscribed themselves in pre-existing patterns of cross-border mobility with France. As such, the Cambrai borderlands came to constitute a transregional node within the Catholic Reformation of the early modern era.

### **Ontmoetingen tussen vluchtelingen en grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit in vroegmoderne grenslanden. De kerkprovincie Kamerijk als transregionaal knooppunt (1559-1600)**

De kerkprovincie Kamerijk is een interessante gevalstudie voor zowel *borderlands studies* als *transregionale geschiedenis*. Sinds haar oprichting in 1559 aan de zuidelijke grens van de Habsburgse Nederlanden, werd de kerkprovincie een toevluchtsoord voor katholieke vluchtelingen van verschillende regionale herkomst, zoals de Britse eilanden, Frankrijk en

de opstandige provincies in de Nederlanden. Dit artikel betoogt dat de (1) ligging van de kerkprovincie aan de Frans-Habsburgs Nederlandse grens (2) leidde tot systematische ontmoetingen tussen katholieke ballingen met een diverse regionale achtergronden. Eerder dan puur te streven naar het creëren van gesegregeerde ballingengemeenschappen, zoals oudere nationalistisch-geïnspireerde historiografie betoogde, (3) werden deze vluchtelingen door hun nieuwe *host society* sterk beïnvloed. Zo gingen ze onder meer gebruik maken van de bestaande patronen van grensoverschrijdende uitwisseling met Frankrijk. Hierdoor werden de *borderlands* van de kerkprovincie Kamerijk een transregionaal knooppunt in de katholieke hervorming van de vroegmoderne periode.

#### ***Entrées d'index***

**Keywords :** borderlands studies, transregional history, early modern history, exile, religious, Reformation Studies, Catholic Reformation, Counter-Reformation, the Low Countries, Habsburg history, ecclesiastical province, Cambrai, archbishopric

**Trefwoorden :** borderlands studies, transregional history, ballingschap, reformatiegeschiedenis, katholieke hervorming, Contrareformatie, Kamerijk, Nederlanden, aartsbisdom, kerkprovincie, Spaanse Nederlanden, Habsburgse Nederlanden